

What is claimed is:

1. The method of using the Internet to create and host a customized online gathering of participants comprising, in combination, the steps of:

providing at least one server computer connected to the Internet for communicating with a plurality of client computers operated by users which are also connected to the Internet, storing at said server computer:

- a) template data defining one or more template web pages, each of said template web pages implementing a predetermined activity in which said users may participate as part of said online gather,
- b) an identification of said first user as the host of said online gathering,
- c) a guest list accepted from said first user identifying a plurality of other invited users, and
- d) customization data accepted from said first user,

combining said template data and said customization data to create customized web pages which together implement said customized online gathering,

establishing an authorized connection via the Internet between said server computer and each of said invited users that choose to participate in said gathering and,

responding to requests received from any given one of said invited users by transmitting to said given user one a requested one of said customized Web pages.

2. The method as set forth in claim 1 wherein said guest list includes the email addresses of at least some of said other users and further including the step of transmitting an invitation to said gathering to each of said email addresses.

3. The method as set forth in claim 1 wherein said customization data accepted from said first user includes the designation of a gathering type and wherein, in response to said designation of said gathering type, said server computer automatically establishes a set of

predetermined default values for said customization data which are combined with said template data to produce preliminary customized pages.

4. The method as set forth in claim 3 said gathering type is designated by the combination an occasion type and a theme associated with said occasion type.

5. The method as set forth in claim 3 further including the steps of accepting from said first user replacement attribute values which may be substituted for particular ones of said default values to modify said preliminary customized pages.

6. The method as set forth in claim 1 wherein said at least one server computer comprises a first server which acts as an application service provider for presenting said Web pages to users who access at least some of said Web pages using addresses supplied by a collaborating server computer.

7. The method as set forth in claim 1 wherein at least a given one of said template web pages implements an activity in which said invited users may communicate with one another, said method including the further steps of accepting contributed data from one or more of said other invited users, storing said contributed data on said server computer, and thereafter displaying at least selected contributed data as part of said given one of said Web pages.